The Black Diaspora: Africans and Their Descendants in the Wider World 1800 to the Present

Written and Edited by
The Black Diaspora Committee of Howard University
Department of History Howard University
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Dedication

To the memory of
Clifton F. Brown
(1943-1986),
alumnus of Howard University,
valued colleague,
scholar of the Black experience
and
member of the Committee on the Black Diaspora of the Department of History, Howard University
To present this collection of writings on people of African descent in the Atlantic World is for me a particular privilege and one of the many joys associated with serving as chairperson of the Department of History at Howard University. The Black Diaspora: Africans and their Descendants in the Wider World, 1800 to the Present, is the second volume of a most ambitious project of the Department of History's Committee on the Black Diaspora. This committee has among its goals, not only the clarifying of themes related to the study of Africans and their descendants, but also making a contribution to the increasing of human knowledge as well as understanding of the roles and places of people of African descent in world history, their impact on world history and their far-reaching influence on the world's cultures and history.

Howard University, long before it was popular, pioneered scholarly research on people of African descent and has been in the vanguard of institutions supporting and encouraging publications on Africans and their descendants. The Department of History, which in 1988 celebrates its seventy-fifth anniversary, includes among its distinguishing characteristics its own early history of systematic study and scientific courses in both African history and the history of Africans' descendants in the Americas. Numbered among its past members of the faculty are women and men who are distinguished by their contributions to published research in the area of the history of Africans and African Americans. Included are such scholars as William Leo Hansberry (who taught African history at Howard University for over twenty years and published seminal works on African history and
cultures), Carter G. Woodson (founder of the Association of the Study of Negro Life and History as well as publisher of the *Journal of Negro Studies*), Rayford W. Logan (who was world-renowned for his pan-Africanist involvements, his meticulous research and his many outstanding publications such as the classic, *The Betrayal of the Negro* from Rutherford B. Hayes to Woodrow Wilson), Elsie Lewis (who headed the Department of History from 1964 to 1969 but in 1955 published her provocative article "The Political Mind of the Negro, 1865-1900", later reprinted in *The Negro in the South Since 1865*, edited by Charles Wynes) and John Hope Franklin (author of the peerless survey of African Americans in the United States, *From Slavery to Freedom*, which is now in its sixth edition). It was against the backdrop of this rich tradition that the members of this department's Committee on the Black Diaspora first conceived and produced part one of this two volume collection of essays on Africans of the continent and their descendants. These dedicated and serious scholars of Howard University have now completed part two to serve as a text of readings for the History Department's course, "Introduction to the Black Diaspora Since 1800" and to be available for use by other educators in need of a supplementary text for world history courses taught elsewhere.

This second volume offers depth and breadth to readers. Anthropological findings and interdisciplinary approaches to the study of Africans and their descendants in the Atlantic world are judiciously interspersed with salient historical readings on Blacks who have been and continue to be dispersed throughout the world. Readings on the culture and the history of Africans and African Americans since 1800 -- with appropriate emphasis on similarities and differences -- present challenges and prompt questions. The introductory essays by members of the faculty of Howard University's Department of History identify themes, illuminate issues and, by design, stimulate any serious student to further investigation. Professors Arthur Burt, Linda Heywood, Edna Greene Medford, Maricela Medina, Adell Patton, Jr. and Vincent Peloso, who constitute the members of the Committee on the Black Diaspora, have compiled as well as written essays that are cause for reaffirmation of the significance of systematic study of African people.

Intrinsic to the mission of the Department of History at Howard University is a perspective on the world that conveys full respect for the integrity and the dignity of all human beings. Thus, as you, the reader and student, seek truth and increase your own knowledge, the Committee on the Black Diaspora with other scholar-educators on the faculty of the Department of History of Howard University urge you to approach *The Black Diaspora* as yet another opportunity to learn and to discover more fully who people of African descent are, what these men and women meant to humankind's history and the influence you may expect them to have on both your present and future.

Genna Rae McNeil
July 1988
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